CDAT Newsletter

Vol.2,   April, 2006

CDAT Survey

We are constantly striving to make the CDAT software easier to use, learn, find documentation and to be more user friendly. Recently we posted the survey on CDAT documentation on the CDAT−discussion list.(see CDAT Support page to subscribe to the list.)
Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey!

We do want to make CDAT the best possible software and we need user input, so that we can put our effort into the part that user finds most useful. Everyone can and is very welcomed to contribute in making the CDAT documentation better. The CDAT plone software portal enables anyone to develop their own pages within CDAT portal and we would all greatly benefit from anyone who can pitch in to make the documentation better. See Site Contributors page to learn about 'Getting started with PCMDI Software Portal' and the tutorials on 'Creating a Tutorial' and 'Style Guide' or go to 'Templates' page.

What we learned from this survey:	What we are doing about it:
We need to provide better way of finding the desired information.	We believe that most of the desired information is already on the CDAT software plone page, but we admit that it may still be hard to find the particular piece. We were already aware of this issue and are working on a solution − any suggestions are welcomed!
Most people learn by following examples, tutorials and manuals.	To enhance and speed up learning from examples, the current CDAT release v4.1 provides the CDAT Demo, that acts also as a hands on tutorial.
Most people have troubles with the VCS.	We will develop specific exampleas and tutorials on this subject, starting with this Newsletter's Tech Tips tutorial. We are also enhancing the vcdat canvas to enable easy access to plot modification: titles, axes and positioning among others.
We need more examples.	

		We are continually adding more tutorials, examples and Tips and Tricks tidbits. Recently we added Advanced Tutorials section as well as Gotchas and are adding more tutorials on numerous CDAT and Python packages.	

If you would like to add something to the survey, or have any comments/suggestions regarding CDAT documentation improvements or CDAT software improvements – we do want to hear it. Please let us know by emailing to Dean Williams.

Big thanks to Krishna AchutaRao for performing the survey! (The questionnaire is listed at the end of this article.)
Below are the survey results as compiled by Krishna.

No.	Question	Responses	Summary
1	How long have you been a CDAT user?		Length of CDAT use ranges from 1 month – 8 years. Median – 3 years
2	Would you call yourself a) Beginner b) Experienced c) Advanced	3a, 1a+, 5b, 1b+, 5c	11 of 15 call themselves Experienced or Advanced
3	In general, how do you learn to use new software a) By reading a manual b) By performing a search on web browser. c) See a tutorial or take a class. d) Try various things using the GUI of an application e) Look at examples.	10a,4b, 4c, 3d, 13e	Large majority learn by looking at examples/manuals
4	What do you use CDAT for?(scientific research and analysis, building applications, data processing applications etc.)		2 people use it for building applications, 11 people that use it for scientific data analysis., 8 people use it for data processing
5	What of the following have you used in your experience with CDAT? (list all that apply) a) Manuals b) Tutorials c) Quick Reference d) Tips and Tricks e) Training Materials (presentations and exercises) f) Posting to the cdat–discussion list g) Getting Started h) Examples i) Other helpful web sites.	13a, 13b, 8c, 6d, 7e,9f, 11g, 10h, 8i	Most people have used Manuals, tutorials, getting started doc, examples.
6	Which of the above do you find most useful?	7a, 5b,3c, 0d, 1e, 1f, 0g, 6h,3i	Most people found Manuals, tutorials and examples useful

7	Where did you have the most difficulty trying to learn something in CDAT?	6 people were trying to do something in vcs, 2 people had axis problems, 2 people were using cdms, one has trouble with understanding when you get MV/MA/Numeric	Most people are having trouble with VCS.
8	What were you trying to do using CDAT when you had the difficulty?		Most people were trying to create plots (turning off max/min labels etc.). Some people have trouble with axes (esp. time!). Mention was made of reading data that spans across many files. One just reading/writing
9	Do you think the documentation is easy to find?		10 yes 1 who specifically liked the new layout. 3 people said No (2 people who specifically did not like new layout and One person not sure what document will be helpful.)
10	Do you think the documentation is adequate?	6 No, 3 Getting Better, 1–2 OK, 2 Yes	Most people would like to see improved documentation
11	What (if any) do you think needs to be done to improve the documentation?	2 people suggested having some place where you can find out where you can look – a meta document. 7 people asked for more, clear, searchable examples. 1 suggested: A direct copy of 10 IDL and 10 GrADS scripts converted to CDAT would be useful for users looking to change package.	More Examples!

The questionnaire on CDAT documentation:

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1. How long have you been a CDAT user?

2. Would you call yourself
 a) Beginner
 b) Experienced
 c) Advanced

3. In general, how do you learn to use new software
 a) By reading a manual
 b) By performing a search on web browser.
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   c) See a tutorial or take a class.
   d) Try various things using the GUI of an application
   e) Look at examples.

4. What do you use CDAT for?
(scientific research and analysis, building applications, data processing applications etc.)

5. What of the following have you used in your experience with CDAT? (list all that apply)
 a) Manuals
 b) Tutorials
 c) Quick Reference
 d) Tips and Tricks
 e) Training Materials (presentations and exercises)
 f) Posting to the cdat-discussion list
 g) Getting Started
 h) Examples
 i) Other helpful web sites.

6. Which of the above do you find most useful?

7. Where did you have the most difficulty trying to learn something in CDAT?

8. What were you trying to do using CDAT when you had the difficulty?

9. Do you think the documentation is easy to find?

10. Do you think the documentation is adequate?

11. What (if any) do you think needs to be done to improve the documentation?

12. Other comments.
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